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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 04/17/06

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autumn

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Japan, US aim to transfer night landing practice facility from Iwojima in fiscal 2009

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Wage hikes average 1.65%, or more than 5,000 yen, for first time in five years

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China bans vessels near gas field in East China Sea without officially informing Japan of the decision

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(2) Long detention of man suspected of molesting woman intended to force confession?

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(2) Gap in society (part 15): Adopt competitive market mechanism to enable making use of colleges basic research

Yomiuri:

- (1) Standard test results should be released
- (2) Discussion on organ transplant law should not be delayed any longer

Nihon Keizai:

- (1) Companies facing major challenge of how to form next-generation-type research institutes

Sankei:

- (1) Net reduction in number of public servants: Government agencies must be aware of public's harsh view
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Tokyo Shimbun:

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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

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Prime Minister's schedule, April 15

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 16, 2006

08:53

Hosted a gathering to view cherry blossoms at Shinjuku Gyoen.

09:59

Returned to residence.

15:25

Delivered a stump speech in front of Daiei Shin-Matsudo Store in Matsudo City, Chiba Prefecture.

16:16

Delivered a stump speech at North Exit of JR Minami-Nagareyama Station in Nagareyama City.

17:50

Delivered a stump speech in front of the Noda City Office Building in Noda City.

19:48

Returned to residence.

Prime Minister's schedule, April 16

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 17, 2006

Stayed at residence all day.

4) Poll: Cabinet support rate down to 43.9%

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Abridged)  
April 16, 2006

The approval rating for the Koizumi cabinet in April was 43.9%, down 3.2 percentage points from March, in a public opinion survey released by Jiji Press yesterday. The disapproval rating also dropped 0.9 points to 34.4%. The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto), now headed by Ichiro Ozawa as its new president, stood at 9.1% in public support, showing a slight increase of 0.3 points. The DPJ still hovered low at a one-digit percentage even under the new leadership.

The survey was conducted April 7-10 by sampling a total of 2,000 persons chosen from among males and females, aged 20 and over, across the nation. The rate of valid respondents was 69.0%.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the DPJ remained flat at one-digit levels for the sixth month in a row.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party stood at 27.0%, up 1.0 points from last month. Among other political parties, the Japanese Communist Party was at 3.0%, up 0.8 points; the New Komeito party at 2.8%, down 1.3 points; the Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) at 1.2%, down 0.1 points; the People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) at 0.1%, remaining flat from last month.

5) Okinawa governor leaves latitude for pragmatic response to Futenma relocation issue; Hints at new conditions

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MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)  
April 17, 2006

Okinawa Governor Keiichi Inamine on April 14 noted that provided that the governments of Japan and the US reach a final agreement on the revision to the plan to relocate US forces' Futenma Air Station from downtown Ginowan to the coastal part of the Camp Schwab, he would "respond to the decision as a matter of course." He indicated his intention to propose new conditions to prevent the relocated heliport from becoming a permanent base, just as he attached such conditions as the 15-year limit to the use of the facilities when he accepted the plan to use reclaimed land off Henoko (previous plan). Inamine's stance leaves open the possibility of a pragmatic response, while firmly maintaining the basic position of calling for relocating the functions outside the prefecture unless the original plan is adopted.

Inamine made this comment during a regular press briefing. He highly evaluated the development of the realignment issue as a whole. Regarding the revised coastal plan, which Nago and the Defense Agency have recently agreed upon, Inamine noted, "There are sometimes occasions when we need to make a judgment, taking into account whether what should be done for Okinawa in the long term. In my view, we can only opt for a better plan." He hinted at the possibility of proposing during future talks with the government conditions designed to avoid base facilities from becoming permanent, including altering the shape of the site and making the use of facilities temporary.

6) Japan, US reach broad agreement to transfer air tankers from Futenma to Iwakuni and conduct long-term training at Kanoya and Guam

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 15, 2006

Japan-US senior working-level talks were held in Tokyo yesterday between foreign and defense officials of the two countries on the realignment of US forces in Japan. As a result, regarding the relocation of KC-130 aerial tankers now based at the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station, the two countries reached a broad agreement to build a facility, including housing, at Iwakuni Air Station in Yamaguchi Prefecture and conduct long-term flight training at the Maritime Self-Defense Force's Kanoya base in Kagoshima Prefecture and Guam. Daily training will be conducted at the Iwakuni base.

Although the Kanoya base is specified in the interim report as the primary site for the relocation of KC-130s, the US has been calling for a shift to the Iwakuni base in terms of user-friendliness. Japan has finally given in to the US call. In the March 12 plebiscite, the overwhelming majority of Iwakuni residents said "no" to the transfer of carrier-borne aircraft from Atsugi Naval Base to the base in the city. The broad agreement reached between Japan and the US yesterday may again draw a fierce reaction from Iwakuni residents.

In anticipation of Iwakuni's strong reaction, the US has decided to relocate eight CH-53 helicopters from the Iwakuni base to Guam to reduce the noise level. The US has also decided to allow building a civilian air terminal at the Iwakuni base in

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compliance with Japan's request.

7) US aircraft's night-landing practice to be transferred from Iwojima by 2009 to Kyushu or Seto Inland Sea

YOMIURI (Top play) (Excerpt)  
April 17, 2006

The Japanese and US governments have reached an agreement to build a regular facility, with 2009 as the target, for night-landing practice (NLP) that has been carried out temporarily by US carrier-based aircraft attached to Atsugi Air Station (Kanagawa Prefecture) on the island of Iwojima (under Tokyo jurisdiction). This was revealed by a government source on April 16. The aircraft are planned for relocation to the US Marines' Iwakuni Air Station (Iwakuni City, Yamaguchi Prefecture) in fiscal 2008 or later, so the US has been seeking a training facility close to that base either in Kyushu or the Seto Inland Sea area. The Japanese government would like to reduce the aircraft-noise level as much as possible, but it has no specific candidate site in mind, and the process of selecting one is likely to be difficult.

8) US air wing redeployment to Iwakuni: Abe says gov't to mull economic packages for local communities

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 17, 2006

Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe yesterday visited the city of Iwakuni, Yamaguchi Prefecture, for a campaign speech in the run-up to the city's mayoral election scheduled for April 23. In the speech, Abe asked for local understanding on issue of relocating a US carrier-based air wing to the US Iwakuni base and reiterated the government's intention to make efforts for local economic development. "The government will definitely support those shouldering the burden," Abe said.

Abe also said, "Japan's national security is protected under its alliance with the United States." He went on, "We will complete (the Iwakuni base's) offshore extension at the earliest possible time, and those helicopters currently deployed here will be asked to go to Guam."

9) Lawless, Nukaga discuss Okinawa Marines relocation

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 15, 2006

Senior foreign and defense officials of Japan and the US failed yesterday to reach an agreement on the two countries' shares of the expenses required for the relocation of US Marines from Okinawa to Guam. They will meet again in Washington starting on April 24. The two countries plan to hold a Japan-US Security Consultative Committee meeting of foreign and defense ministers on May 2 to approve the final report. Japan had earlier proposed extending 3 billion dollars, or 333 billion yen based on the fiscal 2006 exchange rate, in loans for the planned relocation. In the latest talks, Japan has conveyed to the US its readiness to disburse an additional 3 billion dollars from the general account.

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Last night, Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga also discussed the relocation cost issue for about one hour in Tokyo with US Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Richard Lawless and US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer. A source connected with the Japanese government expressed confidence about settling the relocation cost issue yesterday, saying, "It's only a matter of time. A settlement is in sight."

10) In talks on transfer of Marines to Guam, US presents reduced relocation cost, but no agreement reached on Japan's share

ASAHI (Page 3) (Excerpts)  
April 15, 2006

In talks on the realignment of US forces in Japan held in Tokyo on April 13-14 by Japanese and US foreign and defense deputy directors general, Japan revealed it was considering a plan to finance part of its share of the cost to relocate US Marines from Okinawa to Guam from the national treasury in addition to the already announced payment under a loan formula. In response to Japan's call for a reduction in the transfer cost, the US said that the cost would be less than 10 billion dollars (approximately 1.18 trillion yen). As a relocation site for 12 aerial refueling planes stationed in the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station in Okinawa, both sides agreed in general to conduct training at the Maritime Self-Defense Force Kanoya Base in Kagoshima Prefecture and to build housing for personnel and their dependents, as well as the command center at the US Marine Corps' Iwakuni Air Base in Yamaguchi Prefecture.

Japan and the US, however, failed to find common ground on Japan's share of the Guam relocation cost. The two sides have decided to hold another deputy director-level meeting in Washington on April 24.

In the talks held so far, the US estimated the total relocation cost at 10 billion dollars and asked Japan to pay 75% (7.5 billion dollars or about 880 billion yen) of the amount. In response, Japan presented a plan to pay about 3 billion dollars (about 350 billion yen) in government loans as expenses to construct housing and facilities related to their daily lives.

According to Japanese government sources, Japan indicated in the latest talks the possibility of financing infrastructure building, such as roads near the relocation site, with taxpayer money in addition to the loans.

In a call for slashing the project 10 billion dollars as the cost of relocating Marines to Guam, Japan also asked the US to review its basis for the cost estimate. According to the sources, the US showed a list of itemized amounts totaling slightly less than 10 billion dollars.

11) Cabinet-level meeting at beginning of May between Japan-US on USFJ realignment, with issue of Guam relocation cost now in final stage of coordination

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 1) (Excerpt)  
April 15, 2006

In connection with the realignment of US forces in Japan, the Japanese and US governments have reached a basic agreement to

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hold in Washington at the beginning of next month a meeting of the Security Consultative Council (2-plus-2) of cabinet-level officials responsible for foreign and security-affairs. With coordination on the issue of sharing the cost of relocating US Marines on Okinawa to Guam now in the final stage, the outlook is for a final agreement to be reached on realignment issues at the 2-plus-2 meeting.

12) Government to defer GSDF withdrawal from Iraq to fall or later due to unstable security situation

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)  
April 17, 2006

The government decided yesterday to defer the withdrawal of Ground Self-Defense Force troops from the southern Iraqi city of Samawah to the fall or later.

The decision is ascribable to the unstable security situation in Iraq and unclear prospects for establishing a new government. The government also concluded it extremely difficult to conduct withdrawal work in the summer, when the temperature can reach 60 degrees centigrade.

The Defense Agency will issue an order later this month to launch the 10th 500-strong contingency mostly composed of the Eastern Army for rotational deployment to Samawah.

The government had been making preparations for a GSDF withdrawal beginning later this month. But in talks held in London on April 10, Japan, the US, the UK, and Australia shared the view that given the unpredictable security situation in Iraq, activities by multilateral forces would remain critical for the country, even if a permanent government is launched. As a result, Tokyo has decided to delay pulling its troops out of Iraq.

The US has informally asked Japan to deploy troops in the southern Iraqi city of Basra and other places. The government intends to reject the US request, citing the prolonged GSDF deployment in Samawah.

Prime Minister Koizumi is expected to discuss the withdrawal issue with President Bush during his US visit in June.

13) Iraq deployment: Japan troops to stay on, withdraw under next premier

SANKEI (Top play) (Abridged)  
April 16, 2006

Japan will continue its current deployment of Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) troops in the southern Iraqi city of Samawah and will postpone their pullout to this fall, government sources said yesterday. This decision is based on an analysis of the situation in Iraq at a meeting in London on April 10 of foreign and defense affairs officials from Japan, the United States, Britain, and Australia. The Defense Agency will shortly report this to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. It is certain that Koizumi will decide to continue Japan's troop deployment in Iraq and to send reinforcements there in May. Consequently, it has now become effectively impossible to complete the withdrawal of GSDF troops during the premier's term, which is due to run out in September.

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The next prime minister will take over the GSDF's Iraq deployment.

The recent London meeting of officials from the four countries focused on the political process in Iraq, which has been thrown into confusion. They also spared much of their time discussing how to deal with the deterioration of local public security resulting from religious conflicts. Japan therefore could not propose recalling GSDF troops at an early date.

In the meantime, Britain, as well as Japan, has had plans to withdraw its troops from Iraq at an early date. However, the British government told the Japanese government that Iraq, even after its permanent government is established, would likely ask the multinational force to stay on. This shows that the British government deems it difficult for its troops to pull out of Iraq at an early date, because Iraq's security forces cannot be expected to take over the multinational force's duties. The Japanese government judged that Japan would inevitably have to act in concert.

The Defense Agency had initially intended to extend the 9th Iraq Reconstruction Assistance Group's deployment, which started in February and is scheduled to end in May, to prepare for its withdrawal with backup troops to be sent from Japan to Iraq, if the prime minister made a decision on early withdrawal. However, their withdrawal will now be substantially delayed. The government therefore decided to dispatch another detachment.

The government also factored in Iraq's weather. "Iraq is so hot in the middle of summer," a government source said, adding: "The temperature is over 50 degrees (centigrade), so it's hard to strike camp during the hot summer." Japan's troop withdrawal will be completed this fall or afterward even if there is progress in the political process in Iraq, according to the source.

14) Government to hold talks with Iran to discuss its nuclear programs; Will convey that its nuclear development program will affect development of oil field

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 1) (Full)  
April 17, 2006

The governments of Japan and Iran have reached a basic agreement to hold bureau-director-level talks in Tehran to discuss Iran's nuclear programs as early as later this month. Japan will call on Iran to immediately suspend its uranium enrichment program. It will convey its concern that if Iran disregards Japan's call, it could affect the plan to jointly develop the Azadegan oil field located in the southern part of the nation. The project is expected to begin in 2008. The focus of the talks will be on how the Iranian government will respond.

The meeting will bring together Foreign Ministry Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau Director General Motohide Yoshikawa from Japan and Foreign Ministry East Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Izadi from Iran. Yoshikawa will convey to Izadi that the UNSC chairman's late March statement calling on Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment activities within 30 days is an indication of the wishes of the international community. He will then press the Iranian side to end its nuclear development program so as to avoid direct confrontation with the US.

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The Azadegan oil field is an undeveloped oil field located in the southern part of Iran. It has the largest oil reserves in the Middle East, with estimated deposits of between 5 billion and 26 billion barrels. Japan has a 75% stake in the development project. A cancellation would definitely affect Japan's energy policy. Foreign Minister Taro Aso in late February met with his Iranian counterpart Motaki and told him that Iran should suspend its nuclear development.

15) Japan-Iran nuclear talks; Future of oil field interests involves China as well

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 17, 2006

The government is now intensifying its efforts to persuade Iran to stop its uranium enrichment activities. Part of the reason for Tokyo's move is the concern that there is a possibility of China taking over Japan's interests over the oil field, if its plan to jointly develop Azadegan Oil Field with Iran has to be cancelled. Tokyo and Beijing are in fierce competition over energy policy, including the development of gas fields in the East China Sea. Chances are that the development of the Azadegan Oil Field could spark new friction.

Iran was the third largest supplier of crude oil to Japan, following Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, in 2005. If the Azadegan Oil Field is developed in 2008 as planned, Japan's independently developed crude oil imports are expected to rise 50 %. If this precondition collapses, the government will have to reconsider its energy policy to a considerable degree.

Japan-US relations are also greatly affecting the situation. The US has adopted a hard-line policy toward Iran, including the possible use of force. The US has been wary of Japan's participation in the joint Azadegan Oil Field development plan right from the beginning. Japan has taken part in the project nevertheless. If Iran continues its uranium enrichment activities, Japan could find it difficult to embark on the joint project with Iran.

16) China bans ship navigation in waters around Japan-China equidistant line; Japan asks for China's accounting

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 1) (Excerpts)  
April 16, 2006



By Katsuhiko Iino, Beijing

It was learned yesterday that the Chinese government had issued a notice prohibiting ship navigation, except for such boats as workboats, in the waters around the Japan-China equidistant line, as part of its ongoing exploration of gas fields in the East China Sea. According to an official at the Japanese Embassy in Beijing, the banned area includes Japanese territory, crossing over the equidistant line claimed by Japan as the border of its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) with China. Tokyo has inquired of Beijing about the matter and asked for an explanation because no prior announcement was given to Japan.

According to the website of China's Maritime Bureau, which has

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jurisdiction over ship security and traffic, the traffic ban notice was issued as of March 1. The notice says all ship traffic will be banned during the period from March 1 through Sep. 30 in the waters around the Pinghu gas field, where exploration is continuing. The purpose is to lay pipeline and cables.

17) No formal notice of ship traffic ban in East China Sea comes from China; Possibility of violating UN Convention on the Law of the Sea

SANKEI (Top play) (Lead paragraph)  
April 17, 2006

The Chinese government issued a notice banning general ship traffic in the waters around the Japan-China median line claimed by Japan in order to promote the exploration of gas fields in the East China Sea, but it failed to formally inform Japan of the notice for nearly one and a half months, several government officials revealed. China's move may violate such laws as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The government is gearing up to lodge a protest with the Chinese government as early as today.

18) Government plans to cut off ODA grants to China, shift priority to India

SANKEI (Page 2) (Excerpt)  
April 17, 2006

The government yesterday firmed up its intention to cut off non-reimbursable grant aid to China that is part of its official development assistance (ODA) program to that country. It will officially make the decision possibly this summer. In addition to the recognition that accompanying China's economic development, it is no longer appropriate to provide that country with non-reimbursable economic aid, the decision was made in consideration of strong domestic criticism of China for its handling of various issues, such as historical views and gas-field development in the E. China Sea. The government plans to shift to India the amount of ODA reduced to China. It will take a clear stance of placing ODA priority on India.

19) Government to send a JCG ship to waters around Takeshima for survey and collect data necessary for nautical chart

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
April 15, 2006

The Japan Coast Guard (JCG) yesterday announced a plan to send a survey ship to the waters around Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) near Takeshima (or Dokdo in Korean), an island claimed by both Japan and South Korea. On the same day, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe told a press briefing that the purpose is

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"to collect data necessary for creating a marine chart." The South Korean government, via diplomatic channels, filed a protest and called on Japan to stop the survey, but the Japanese government intends to launch the survey as planned.

Survey likely to cause a dispute between Japan, ROK

According to the JCG, the planned survey of the waters around Takeshima will be the first large-scale undertaking in about 30

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years. The survey had not begun as of yesterday. Seoul will surely raise stronger objections if the survey ship enters the waters near Takeshima. This move is likely to add a new dispute to the already strained relations between Japan and South Korea, for instance, a suspension of "shuttle diplomacy" between the top leaders of the two countries.

20) Seoul calls for immediate cancellation of survey

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
April 15, 2006

By Motohiro Ikeda, Seoul

South Korea's Vice Foreign Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Yu Myung Hwan yesterday called Japanese Ambassador to South Korea Shotaro Oshima to his office and asked for an immediate cancellation of Japan's planned maritime survey by a Japan Coast Guard (JCG) boat in the sea area around Takeshima (or Dokdo in Korean).

Pointing out that the planned area for the survey includes its exclusive economic zone (EEZ), South Korea asserts: "Conducting the survey without our consent is in violation of international law. We strongly oppose the survey." If Japan were to conduct the survey, South Korea would take necessary proceedings in accordance with international law and relevant domestic laws. Given this, "this matter could have a serious impact on bilateral relations," Yu warned. Oshima rebutted: "The survey will be conducted within Japan's EEZ."

21) Minshuto head Ozawa meets with Soga Gakkai chairman, setting off alarms in ruling camp

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)  
April 16, 2006

Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) President Ichiro Ozawa met on April 11 with Soga Gakkai Chairman Einosuke Akiya and Vice Chairman Masaaki Masaki, the Yomiuri Shimbun learned on April 15. The religious sect Soga Gakkai is the chief support body of the New Komeito, the coalition partner of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Ozawa visited the religious sect's headquarters in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, on the evening of April 11 soon after telephoned to the headquarters, as part of his efforts to tell them his assumption of the presidency of the main opposition party. Ozawa has known the two Soga Gakkai leaders since he played a major role in forming a coalition with the New Komeito under the governments of Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa and Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata during the 1993-1994 period. The three met for about 10 minutes, according to a source concerned.

Since Ozawa has called at such LDP's support bodies as the Japan Association for the Bereaved Families of the War Dead, the Japan Medical Association, and the Japan Dental Association after he assumed his post, the ruling parties are growing alarmed.

22) Foreign Minister Aso blasts Minshuto President Ozawa's Yasukuni comments

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MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
April 15, 2006

Speaking at a press conference on April 14, Foreign Minister Taro Aso strongly criticized Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) President Ichiro Ozawa's remarks that enshrining war criminals went against the spirit of Yasukuni Shrine, saying:

"Even though Yasukuni Shrine has said it cannot disenshrine Class-A criminals from the other war dead, (Mr. Ozawa) says that the shrine can do so. I think his remarks go beyond his authority."

Aso again expressed his opposition to the disenshrinement of Class-A war criminals from Yasukuni Shrine.

23) "Fielding single candidate for LDP presidential race possible through talks," former Prime Minister Mori says

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Excerpts)  
April 15, 2006

In an interview recorded on April 14 for TBS television, former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori indicated that it would be possible for Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda to make a decision through talks on which

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of the two would run in the next presidential election of the Liberal Democratic Party. Mori said, "It's not good for a company to have two persons struggling for the presidency. The two should discuss it."

Mori sought to check Abe and Fukuda, saying, "Mr. Fukuda is not a person who will say, 'I'll do it,' when Mr. Abe has his own intentions. I wonder whether Mr. Abe will say, 'Wait, It's my turn,' when Mr. Fukuda decides to run in the race backed by many supporters."

SCHIEFFER